

## **Making Our Schools Even Better & Giving Marylanders the Skills They Need to Compete**

*“The more a person learns, the more a person earns . . . and the more jobs we create.”*  
-- Governor Martin O’Malley

Even as we’ve cut more State spending than any administration in modern Maryland history, together we’ve chosen to invest record funding to improve our schools, and to make college more affordable. In part because of those better choices, we’ve had the #1 public schools in America for 5 years running, and according to the College Board, we’ve been the best state in the nation since 2007 in holding down the costs of college tuition.

We can always do more to give our workers the skills they need to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century global economy. Two of the key initiatives that Governor O’Malley is pushing this year are: (1) accelerating our use of digital learning tools; and (2) advancing accelerated pathways for students seeking career & technical education (CTE) or training in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).<sup>1</sup>

### **(1) Digital Learning**

- By harnessing the power of technology and innovative teaching tools, we can make teachers more effective and help students learn like never before. That’s why Governor O’Malley proposes creating a Digital Learning Innovation Fund to provide resources to local school districts to accelerate their conversion to comprehensive digital learning environments.
- The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would make competitive grants to districts that propose compelling plans for conversion to digital learning. Separate competitions would be held for large and for small districts to ensure that districts of varying size are selected for funding.
- Supported activities would include: (i) providing multimedia assets to students and teachers; (ii) differentiating instruction to address diverse learning styles; (iii) differentiating assignments and leveling of materials for students advancing at different paces; (iv) training and support to both educators and students; and (v) offering more current information than traditional textbooks on an ongoing basis.
- The State and some districts have already starting instituting digital learning, including shared purchasing, online courses, recovery courses, eReaders, ePortfolios, and hardware conversions.

### **(2) Career & Technical Education**

- We want to make sure students have the skills and the credentials necessary to get a job in today’s competitive economy. So Governor O’Malley proposes creating an Early College Innovation Fund to expand early college access programs that help students seeking career and technical education (CTE) or training in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).
- Local school systems would partner with higher education institutions to create early college high schools or other forms of early college access. MSDE would then provide support to help eligible partnerships get new early college programs off the ground.
- Priority would be given to proposals that launch early college high schools (also known as “middle colleges”) focused on CTE or STEM and that provide students with credentials (in the form of degrees, certificates, and certifications, as appropriate) in high-demand fields in Maryland.
- The program draws heavily on the lessons learned through the development and implementation of the Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George’s Community College.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: other initiatives the Governor is pushing include (i) the EARN bill, which will allow us to partner with businesses to equip more workers with the skills they need to fill the jobs in highest demand; (ii) community college investments; (iii) investing to keep college affordable; and (iv) record investments in K-12 schools.